

Amendments To The Specification

Please replace paragraph [0001] with the following amended paragraph:

[0001] This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/337,014 filed on November 8, 2001, entitled "Handling Potentially Contaminated Collection Mails" and is a divisional of U.S. Patent Application 10/291,887 filed on November 8, 2002, entitled "Handling Potentially Contaminated Mail." ~~Mail.~~ Mail, now issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,892,934. The contents of the above is relied upon and expressly incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

Please replace paragraph [0007] with the following amended paragraph:

[0007] Mail receptacles have occasionally been the targets of pranks and vandalism. Recently there was a spate of more serious incidents involving contaminated mail. It is believed that mail was deposited and delivered through typical mail channels where the mailpieces had been ~~deliberated~~ deliberately contaminated with biological hazard material. Investigation has confirmed that some mailpieces deposited in mailboxes were contaminated with anthrax spores. Some members of the postal service, as a result of their handling contaminated mail, suffered exposure to the biological materials.

Please replace paragraph [0019] with the following amended paragraph:

[0019] According to the invention, it is suggested to use resealable bags (liners) in receptacles for collecting or depositing items for delivery to another. These receptacles would include collection boxes and chutes in office building lobbies, delivery company lobbies, in pack and send lobbies, or in post office lobbies. When the delivery items are to be collected from the

receptacle, the bag is hermetically sealed by the mechanical opening action of the receptacle. The delivery person or letter carrier removes and locks the sealed collection bag and re-installs and empties bag ~~[[and]]~~ at the collection point.

Please replace paragraph [0024] with the following amended paragraph:

[0024] Referring to figure FIG. 1 there is shown a schematic view of a biohazard isolating bag positioned inside a postal mailbox. Mailbox 10 is a conventional postal mailbox. Such a mailbox is typically rectangular in vertical profile and square or rectangular in horizontal profile although other configurations are possible. Mailbox 10 includes deposit door 20. Mailbox 10 also includes an access door, not shown, at the rear of the mailbox 10 a non-public access means, such as a door, through which a postal worker accesses the contents of mailbox 10. As is customary, mailbox 10 defines an interior space and an exterior space. When rectangular in shape, mailbox 10 includes four walls a top and bottom.

Please replace paragraph [0035] with the following amended paragraph:

[0035] ~~As shown in Figure 2a rails~~ FIG. 2a shows a top view of rails 40 that may be attached to interior walls of mailbox 10. As shown in this figure rails are affixed to the front wall and two side walls of mailbox 10. No rail is attached to the rear wall of mailbox 10 as this wall also typically serves as the access door ~~[[20]]~~ to mailbox 10. While it is preferred to provide rails

40 on three walls of mailbox 10 other arrangements are possible. For example only two walls may include such rails 40. Further rails 40 preferably extend along a substantial length of each wall, although they need not do so. The purpose of rails 40 is to support bag 30, and the necessary support may be achieved in rails that only extend along a partial length of the wall.

Please replace paragraph [0039] with the following amended paragraph:

[0039] Another preferred embodiment includes Velcro as a support means. In this embodiment strips of velcro are affixed to interior walls of mailbox 10 where, for example, rails 40 have been described as being positioned. Reciprocal strips of Velcro are attached to bag 30, proximate bag opening. Bag 30 is thus positioned in the desired position in the interior of mailbox 10 by contacting or engaging strips of velcro on bag 30 to corresponding strips of Velcro on mailbox 10.

Please replace paragraph [0043] with the following amended paragraph:

[0043] Preferably drawstring 110 and raceway 120 are positioned near the top of bag 30 as shown in Figure 1. In such a position drawstring 110 and raceway 120 encircle the opening of bag 30. Placement of drawstring 110 and raceway 120 in such a position allows maximum use of the space in ~~bag 30 receive~~ bag 30 to receive and carry mail.

Please replace paragraph [0055] with the following amended paragraph:

[0055] According to the invention, it is suggested to install reusable ~~zip-lock type~~ ziplock-type bags (liners) in collection boxes and at postal lobby chutes. At mail collection time the bag is hermetically sealed by the mechanical opening action of the receptacle in this instance a mailbox. The operator removes and locks the sealed collection bag and re-installs and empties the bag at the collection point.

Please replace paragraph [0056] with the following amended paragraph:

[0056] The containers may be provided with mechanical fastening mechanisms for use in sealing the containers. One such mechanism is shown in Figure 5 and is indicated by number 240 as comprising a common "~~zip-lock~~" type ziplock-type mechanism having an elongated bead which fits within and mates with an elongated groove formed in decontamination bag 200. As is known in the art ~~the zip-lock~~ the ziplock may comprise a number of mutually engaging ridges. This mechanism may be provided in a strip of material secured to the bag. Although mechanical seals may provide the sole sealing for the containers, films of this type are also capable of accepting a heat seal. However, in this case, since there may not be an effective air-tight seal, particularly for maintaining an isolated atmosphere, it might be necessary or desirable to provide excess material at the ends of the container.

Please replace paragraph [0060] with the following amended paragraph:

[0060] This system can also be set up to permit on-the-spot testing of the contents of the bag or other container, in particular, the air ~~[[form]]~~ from the bag, to determine whether microbes are detected. Also, if they are detected, a disinfectant or the like can be put into the bag to “kill” or neutralize the microbes. After the appropriate “kill period” the disinfectant or gas can be neutralized and released. The contents of the bag or other container may be removed and handled in the usual procedures. The bag may be treated as hazardous waste.

Please replace paragraph [0061] with the following amended paragraph:

[0061] While preferred embodiments of this invention have been shown and described, modifications thereof can be made by one skilled in the art without departing ~~[[form]]~~ from the spirit or teaching of this invention. The embodiments described herein are exemplary only and are not limiting. Many variations and modifications of the system and apparatus are possible and are within the scope of the invention. One of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the process just described may easily have steps added, ~~[[take]]~~ taken away, or modified without departing from the principles of the present invention. Accordingly, the scope of protection is not limited to the embodiments described herein, but is only limited by the claims which follow, the scope of which shall include all equivalents of the subject matter of the claims.